

## **CLAIMS**

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### **WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A safety scalpel system, comprising:

2 a blade;

a handle configured to couple to said blade; and

4 a housing configured to couple to, and to substantially enclose said blade, and to  
couple to said handle, and allow said blade to selectively couple to said handle and to  
6 selectively decouple from said housing,

wherein said handle is configured to couple to said blade with or without said  
8 housing.

2. The system of Claim 1 wherein said handle comprises:

2 a grasping portion;

a housing receiving portion adjacent said grasping portion, configured to  
4 selectively couple and decouple to said housing; and

a blade receiving portion adjacent said housing receiving portion, configured to  
6 selectively couple and decouple to said blade.

3. The system of Claim 2, wherein said housing receiving portion comprises:

2 a top channel; and

a bottom channel.

4. The system of Claim 2, wherein said blade receiving portion comprises:  
2 a groove configured to couple to said blade; and  
a stop in spaced relation to said groove, wherein said stop is configured to limit  
4 travel of said blade with respect to said handle.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said housing comprises:  
2 a housing having an inner surface and an outer surface, wherein retaining  
members are positioned on said inner surface, and are configured to couple to a blade;  
4 an actuatable tab;  
a guide member integral with said actuatable tab configured to, when said tab is  
6 actuated, allow said housing to couple to said handle and move from a safe position to  
an exposed position; and  
8 a blade actuator configured to, when actuated, decouple said blade from said  
handle when said housing is in said safe position.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein said housing couples to said handle in a safe  
2 position, wherein said housing encloses said blade.

7. The system of Claim 3, wherein said guide member couples to said top channel  
2 of said handle when said actuatable tab is actuated.

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein said blade is made of plastic.

9. A method of using a safety scalpel system, comprising:

2 providing a handle, and a safety housing substantially enclosing a blade;  
coupling said safety housing and said blade to said handle in an exposed position  
4 by actuating a tab; and  
decoupling said blade from said handle by actuating a blade actuator when said  
6 housing is in a safe position,  
wherein said blade may couple to said handle with or without said safety  
8 housing.

10. A safety blade housing system, comprising:

2 a housing having an inner surface and an outer surface, wherein retaining  
members are positioned on said inner surface, and are configured to couple to a blade;  
4 an actuatable tab;  
a guide member integral with said tab configured to, when said tab is actuated,  
6 allow said housing to couple to a handle; and  
a blade actuator configured to, when actuated, decouple said blade from said  
8 handle,  
wherein said blade couples to said handle when said housing moves between a  
10 safe position, and an exposed position wherein said blade is exposed for use.

11. The system of Claim 10, further comprising a stabilizing member configured to  
2 couple to a bottom channel of said handle.

12. The system of Claim 10, wherein said housing couples to said handle in a safe  
2 position, wherein said housing encloses said blade.

13. The system of Claim 10, wherein said guide member couples to a top channel of  
2 said handle when said actuatable tab is actuated.

14. The system of Claim 10, wherein said housing travels to said exposed position  
2 in which said blade is exposed for use.

15. The system of Claim 10, wherein said blade is made of plastic.

16. A safety scalpel system, comprising:

2 a blade;

a handle, including a grasping portion, a housing receiving portion, and a blade  
4 receiving portion configured to couple to said blade; and

a housing configured to couple to, and to substantially enclose said blade, and to  
6 couple to said handle, and allow said blade to selectively couple to said handle and to  
selectively decouple from said housing,

8 wherein said handle is configured to couple to said blade with or without said  
housing.

17. The system of Claim 16, wherein said blade receiving portion comprises:

2 a groove configured to couple to said blade; and  
a stop in spaced relation to said groove, wherein said stop is configured to limit  
4 travel of said blade with respect to said handle.

18. The system of claim 16, wherein said housing comprises:

2 retaining members configured to couple to said blade;  
an actuatable tab;  
4 a guide member integral with said tab configured to, when said tab is actuated,  
allow said housing to couple to said handle and move from a safe position to an  
6 exposed position; and  
a blade actuator configured to, when actuated, decouple said blade from said  
8 handle when said housing is in said safe position.

19. The system of Claim 16, wherein said guide member couples to said top channel  
2 of said handle when said actuatable tab is actuated.

20. A safety blade housing system, comprising:

2 retaining members configured to couple to a blade;  
an actuatable tab;  
4 a guide member integral with said tab configured to, when said tab is actuated,  
allow said housing to couple to a handle;

6 a blade actuator configured to, when actuated, decouple said blade from said  
handle, wherein said blade couples to said handle when said housing moves between a  
8 safe position, and an exposed position wherein said blade is exposed for use;

a stabilizing member configured to couple to a bottom channel of said handle,  
10 wherein said guide member couples to a top channel of said handle when said  
actuatable tab is actuated.

21. The system of Claim 20, wherein said housing travels to said exposed position  
2 in which said blade is exposed for use.

22. A safety scalpel system, comprising

2 a blade;

a handle configured to couple to said blade; and

4 a housing configured to couple to, and to substantially enclose said blade, and to  
couple to said handle, and allow said blade to selectively couple to said handle and to  
6 selectively decouple from said housing,

wherein said handle is configured to couple to said blade with or without said  
8 housing, and

wherein said housing is configured to recouple to said handle after removal  
10 therefrom.

23. A safety scalpel system, comprising:

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a blade;

a handle integral with said blade; and

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a housing configured to couple to said handle and to move from a safe to  
an exposed position.

24. The system of Claim 23, wherein said blade is made of plastic.